

Inkslingers Session

16th November 2024



Swanning Along – Marley Park Rathfarnham

Do one thing every day that scares you.

- Eleanor Roosevelt -

To Be Scared

Greg Fields

After seven years it had all become routine, and Willie Meadows knew quite well that routines were boring, that they stifled what little shreds of creativity and passion his increasingly tired soul retained. He walked each day into a building whose steps and sounds and creaks were the only music he would hear. He saw the same faces in the same places, doing the same things. They would exchange meaningless greetings, or hold the same nonbinding conversations about topics on the far periphery of any meaning.

And lately, the worst of this tedium was the job itself. It had not always been so. Once, he had been a young man reaching for his prime, convinced that because he was Willie Meadows he must certainly breathe a special air, and finding himself at the city desk of the Washington Post, one of the pinnacles of the profession. He dove into his assignments with a vigour that was, if not quite innocent, at least honest. He did good work. He wrote quickly and precisely, brought out the meat of the things he wrote about and made them clear without interpretation. He would honour the public trust in finding the heart of even the most trivial matters, then display his findings with brevity.

One evening, with nothing to do, Willie poured himself a scotch and pulled up his portfolio. He began with the early stories. At the time they seemed fascinating and almost other-worldly – corruption in the Parks Department, a zoning battle that pitted residents against a smoky new industry, and, best of all, the murder of a jogger in Rock Creek Park, not half a mile from where he lived.

‘Some good writing there,’ he said to himself as the smoky texture of the scotch triggered the feelings those stories might have engendered. He had made it a point then to stay objective, to write facts and not feelings. The murder had been shocking, and Willie had even known of the victim. But anything he might have felt would compromise his work, so he put it aside.

Now, on this dreary, blurry night, he could let those feelings emerge. All these years he had written the scripts of people’s lives. To him those scripts were products. But to those who lived them, they carried the range of human striving, and loss, and tragedy, and despair. Rarely exultation or celebration. Happiness doesn’t sell.

Willie put aside his portfolio, went to the kitchen and refilled his drink. He thought of Rosie Carter. Rosie, with her innocence and naivete and boundless passion for what she saw as truth. An idealist she was, and still fresh in her ideals. Willie sighed. He had never been that way, not really, but part of him had come close.

He liked being around Rosie. She invigorated him by challenging him in his cynicism. But he knew it was all temporary. The job would bludgeon those sensibilities, and the natural processes of adulthood would dampen the good things, like peace and place and love. Rosie would become a parallel line, and she and Willie would meet somewhere in the middle.

‘Maybe it’s time to find something else,’ Willie mused. He remembered Eleanor Roosevelt’s counsel that we should do one thing every day that scares us, and he recalled his first days at the Post, when he was terrified of failure. He needed that fear again. Fear kept him on edge, and this night, and most nights, Willie Meadows had no edges.

But as he considered all this, he had no idea what else he could do. His core had softened into numbness, and the fire that had stoked his heart and his thoughts and his will had grown cold, replaced by the dull thrum of boredom and predictability.

‘What the else would I be good for?, he thought. ‘Maybe the mob needs a new hit man. Or I could just live a life of petty crimes, thievery and the like. I’d die young, but each day would be different. And maybe that’s enough.’

Willie put his glass aside and went to bed. After an uneasy sleep, he rose, showered, and once again made his way from the Metro to the same desk he had claimed for the past seven years. Another day, it was, and nothing in it gave his heart a reason to beat faster. Nothing to move him, and most certainly nothing at all to scare him.

Fearless Roger

Miguel A. Rivera, Jr.



Roger was a simple soul. One whose life had changed by way of a dramatic turn of events during his childhood. Until the death of his parents, a sheltered life of pampered wealth and hand-picked tutors had been his entire existence. When his parents perished, his avarice laden aunt and uncle seized the family fortune, thereafter dumping him at the cheapest and least comfortable boarding school they could find. It was there that Roger finally found himself.

After a few initial beatings and bullying by the other boys, He began making friends, taking greater and greater risks, and eventually rising as a leader.

Years later as an adult and soldier, he'd do two tours in Afghanistan. After coming home, countless contact sport matches and other daredevil affairs were his new existence.

Shortly after his aunt and uncle themselves had passed, the family fortune reverted to Roger.

It was not the money that gave him pleasure but the financial freedom to indulge in his peculiar habits that gave him joy. The minute he began jumping out of planes, racing cars, and doing the many things denied him by an insulated, rich boy life, he'd found himself reborn. No one, not even Roger could understand his insatiable thirst, unstoppable appetite for tense, death defying situations and scenarios. That was until of course he met Mable.

Endless streams of wild, tattooed, free-spirited women had come and gone in his life with nary a clue to his deeply buried heart.

But then one day, he stumbled into a flower shop of all things, in search of a carnation for a hastily-agreed-upon wedding participation.

She stood behind the counter wearing a pink apron decorated with small flowers. Her curly golden hair a crown, and her perfect posture something akin to a princess who'd lost her way, somehow ending up in that shop. The nano-second her eyes had risen to meet him, his very volatile, thrill-seeking soul had done something it had never done before. It paused to smell the

roses and contemplate the beauty of their attendant.

“Good morning, how may I help you.”, The words poured from her mouth as from a golden jar on Mount Olympus. Roger the fearless, found that his throat was locked, and he could not immediately respond to this blue-eyed goddess.

It was at that precise moment that Roger new he’d finally found the ying to his yang, his balance, but also his Achilles heel. The one he could not live without. For the very first time in his life, Roger felt fear...

Do One Thing Every Day That Scares you (E Roosevelt)

Elaine Reardon

I wonder if Eleanor Roosevelt thought of bolting when she looked up the aisle for marriage, ready to walk to her new destiny. Did she weigh things, decide it was for the best, and take that first step? And how did she feel about that decision 10 years later. I wonder, before the marriage, did she have her tea leaves read, their astrology charts done, or a secret reading of the tarot? Did any of her close friends give her advice? What did her parents say? Finally, what did Eleanor think as she went bridal gown shopping, and her parents planned the menu and venue. Was about love?

When I married at 21 years, it was the average age of my contemporaries. You would had a job after school, saved some money, or perhaps attended college..

If you had gone into the military upon graduation, and survived Vietnam, you were returned, albeit differently. You had changed as the country changed, looked deep into personal convictions of right and wrong. Images of napalm seared into many of our brains, and today, still can bring up feelings of horror about the things humans do.

And back then we acted on it, be it flag-waving patriotism or standing against the war by speaking at enormous gatherings at the White House and other public spaces. It was a time that we, as a country became frightened perhaps, that we would collapse; but we tried, we tried to be honest with ourselves. This was not a time like that of Roosevelts in the 1970s.

In May of 1971 I stood in the entrance of Saint Theresa's church, a long veil puffed behind me, a crown of daisies on my head, and more in my hand. A group of bridesmaids lurked behind me, impatient.

My handsome high school sweetheart, the person I went to the high school prom with, stood up at the altar. The small church was filled with family and friends.

Our families approved. It turned out, unbeknownst to us, that our families had known each other, and we had played together as babies. My father said, "Oh, I remember; he always had a wet diaper when they visited.

That sentence, you would think, would render someone harmless. But military training and war changes the wettest diaper wearer. I took my first two steps onto the aisle. I thought about his angry outbursts, when he'd hurt people-grabbed them and tossed them for no reason, and more. I thought about his hands on my neck, his eyes glazed over, before he snapped back to himself. I took a few more steps up the aisle before I stopped again. And considered. Would I just turn around and run?

Maria leaves home

Deirdre Powell.

A swan drifted eastward in the lake, as if it hadn't a care in the world. The water rippled, mallard ducks basked in the shelter of the overhanging bushes of the lake, and a small child was heard to cry in the distance.

Maria, a Polish girl, who had recently arrived to Dublin, was enthralled by the beauty of the scene she was witnessing in Rathfarnham. She came from a country town in Poland, on the outskirts of Gdansk, and the type of beauty she was witnessing was different from back home. She noted the natural scene before her eyes but became alert when she heard the cry of the child. Maria worked as a childcare assistant and children were an important part of her life, so when she heard the cry, she looked around to see what the matter was. She scanned the vegetation near the water and looked around but could see nothing unusual. That seems a little strange, she thought to herself.

She strolled along the banks of the water and tried to keep the swan in view. The newness of Dublin and its environs were still fresh enough to engage her imagination, so that she did not feel stale. Her parents had not wanted her to travel so far away to find work, and her father was of the opinion that life was the same everywhere, you just had to get used to it. But, no, Maria had argued that she wanted adventure and that she wanted to spend time in another country away from her home. She found Dublin and the Dubliners friendly and had learned English at school, but the English spoken in Dublin was a bit different from that which she had learned back in Poland. She felt a little awkward to be honest. She could understand her new language when she spoke to the Irish one-to-one, but it was harder to understand people in groups and she was just getting the knack of being able to understand the news on television.

Presently, she came to a bridge and decided that she would walk under it and explore the vegetation. She thought that she heard the cry of the child once more and peered further under the bridge. Her shoes crunched in the mud. She thought of her Aunt Ella who used to say that one should do one thing every day that scares you and, to be honest, she found this rather scary. A shadowy, figure appeared on the stone wall underneath the bridge and started to cry. In an instant, Maria realised that she was looking at a ghost and she too, screamed, and ran away from the scene. It was to be quite some time before she would go walking in Rathfarnham on her own again.

Do One Thing Every Day That Scares You

Mark L'estrage

When they all arrived, they couldn't believe their eyes. Someone must have told the restaurant that Larry was coming because there were signs everywhere saying, "Welcome, Larry, to our new restaurant! Hope you enjoy the Lamppost Burger."

Larry felt like a little celebrity because everyone wanted a selfie with him holding the burger.

Johnny, his best friend, felt a bit left out—until Larry said loudly, "This is my best friend!" That was all it took for Johnny to be included in all the excitement. Soon after, the restaurant manager approached Larry and asked, "Would you do something for me, please?"

"What's that?" Larry asked, curious.

"Would you mind being in an advertisement for the burger? We'll pay you very well."

Larry hesitated. His biggest fear was being on camera, especially being interviewed. Before he could refuse, Johnny chimed in, "Just do it! It's good to do one thing every day that scares you and pushes you out of your comfort zone."

After thinking it over, Larry eventually agreed. The video shoot was scheduled for the following week.

When Larry got home and told his parents, they were thrilled. His dad said proudly, "I knew one day our name would make one of us famous—or at least help us do something amazing!"

But Larry wasn't so sure. All week, he worried about the thought of being on television. When the big day arrived, his dad drove him to the restaurant.

"This feels impossible for me. I'm really nervous," Larry admitted as they pulled into the parking lot.

"You don't have to do it if you're not happy, son," his dad reassured him.

"No, I want to do it—it just feels impossible," Larry said.

His dad smiled and said, "It always seems impossible until it's done. You'll be great, son—our little film star."

That made Larry laugh, and as they pulled into the car park, he saw all his friends from school waiting to cheer him on.

“This will be fun after all,” he said, grinning. “I don’t know why I was so worried. Sorry for doubting myself, Dad.”

The advertisement shoot went smoothly, and Larry did a fantastic job. To top it off, he got paid a nice sum of money for his effort.

The next day, Larry turned to Johnny with a big grin and said, “I know where we’re going tomorrow—straight to Smith’s!”

Johnny laughed and replied, “Lucky we found that Lamppost Burger!”

